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# King Arthur in Cumbria! Philip Dunn

## Myth

Pendragon castle and King Arthur's Round table probably names date back to the Cliffords first is a Norman castle the second a bronze Age Henge 2000 BC excavated in 1940s. Romans left Cumbria around 410 by 600 it was part of the kingdom of Northumbria minimal evidence of Dark Ages. Various myths persist and some are recorded in ancient poetry eg Ballad re Sir Lancelot Du Lac. Giant's grave in Penrith church but stones can all be identified to sites - buildings! Minimal literary evidence.

## Archaeological evidence

It was argued that the economic and cultural condition in Cumbria in the dark ages were such that there could have been an Arthurian kingdom.

### Roman period

There are many forts but not necessarily the 1/2 day marching distance apart that is often found some are on major routes eg Brougham, some may have had a different function eg Kirby Thore was it there because of the mineral sources? All the forts have settlements suggesting civilian activity. How involved were the local peoples? Little evidence to go on of the 100-200 forts only 2 have been investigated and they provided little information. Evidence of native and roman interaction is best seen in the funerary monuments. Brougham by-pass cut through a roman cemetery burial in the roman style carvings depicted as romans but the names are Celtic. Throughout the County small sculptures are found suggesting that the Romans were worshipping local Celtic gods, gold prayer plaques found Bewcastle. Crosby Ravensworth Iron age site examined by Collingwood in 1902 showed that the Roman road went around it. 200 AD the sites consisted of single or 2-3 round huts but from 200 AD rectangular buildings are evident and a change in farming style roads are evident for taking stock back to the settlement ? for milking. this is occurring through out the Solway and Eden. Evidence Greek trading in 3rd century.

300-350 BC in the rest of the country Roman towns start to fall apart In Cumbria, Carlisle an important Roman town shows evidence of continuous occupation. Birdoswald is being continually rebuilt. Nearby there are post holes which could be those of a large Dark Ages hall Was Birdoswald Camelot? There is evidence of a large civil settlement and there has been speculation re its name. It seems that in Cumbria after the Romans left life continues as before.

### Anglo Saxons

Early evidence of the Saxons are found at Brougham where there is house structures peculiar to them.



Bewcastle Cross is a mixture of Celtic and Christian symbols, it is a commemorative cross constructed at a place of great slaughter

Ormside Bowl dated as Viking but the artistry looks more local cf Bewcastle Cross.

Ruthwell Cross early 6th century a period of renaissance ie Camelot

References in Welsh Poetry Taliesin eulogy of Urien King of Rheged who had a palace along the Lyvnette (only place name stated) this would be near the known settlements. The poem describes the actions of Urien's son Owen and compares him to Arthur suggesting that Arthur was known to the local people. Over the centuries it is likely that the land holdings have remained intact but that the homesteads have moved Battle of the Larks Nest Tarn near High Heskitt a settlement site has now been located from pre iron age to 6-7th century with artefacts sickle horse bit and military kit supporting the story of a battle in the area